

School Liaison Officer Guidebook

Volume 1



Department of the Army

FOREWORD

Brighten the lives of children and they will enlighten your future.

As a School Liaison Officer, your success, in many ways, determines the academic success of our military children. Their lives revolve around their school, their community, and the military lifestyle of their parents. When you use your knowledge and skill to eliminate barriers to their success, and work in partnership with their schools and communities, you play an immensely important role in their lives and their academic success.

I invite you to read this guidebook, use it as a valuable reference, and add to it your own unique insights and creative techniques. As you work with parents, teachers, administrators, and community and military leaders, you will use all of your strengths and talents. I encourage you to share your best practices with other School Liaison Officers and build on the principles in this guidebook.

Thank you for your valuable contribution to the quality of life of our soldiers and their families. Thank you also for helping our military children be the best students they can be.



CRAIG B. WHELDEN
Brigadier General, U.S. Army
Commanding Officer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our appreciation to all the individuals involved in the development of this guidebook. The information presented in this guidebook was obtained through communications we and Headquarters had with School Liaison Officers worldwide. We would like to acknowledge the following individuals for their particular efforts.

To all the School Liaison Officers, who attended the 1998 School Liaison Officer Workshop, we express our gratitude in paving the road for our exploration of the roles and responsibilities of School Liaison Officers. In our meeting, you identified all the different ways you support command, families and the community. This information was helpful in establishing a preliminary framework of the areas of responsibility.

Following the workshop, a School Liaison Officer worksheet was developed to get clarification on the areas of responsibilities, particularly what is and is not the responsibility of a School Liaison Officer. The following individuals provided feedback to this request:

- David Leinberger, Germany
- G. A. Maxwell, Fort Leonard Wood, MO
- Janice Witte, Germany
- Sonia Wriglesworth, Fort Meade, MD.

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- SFC Joseph Ortega, Fort Hood, TX
- Sonia Wriglesworth, Fort Meade, MD.

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SCHOOL LIAISON OFFICER GUIDEBOOK

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VOLUME 2: REFERENCES

I. INTRODUCTION



This guidebook has been written for School Liaison Officers. It presents useful information and guidance obtained from School Liaison Officers. More specific information about the guidebook is provided in the following sections:

- Purpose of guidebook
- Goals of guidebook
- Sources used for this guidebook.

Purpose of Guidebook

This guidebook is a resource tool for School Liaison Officers worldwide. To date, individuals assigned to the School Liaison Officer role have received little or no guidance, except for a fortunate few who get information from, or have a chance to talk with, their predecessor. This situation has left most individuals “to make it up as they go along.” As a result, School Liaison Officers worldwide function in very different ways. Further, School Liaison Officers have had no way to share what they have learned on the job. This guidebook is intended to address both of these issues by spelling out for the first time what School Liaison Officers do (and don't do), and by sharing information and ideas gathered from School Liaison Officers.

Goals of Guidebook

This guidebook is intended to assist School Liaison Officers by:

- Defining roles and responsibilities
- Identifying ways to be effective
- Providing key information
- Establishing critical steps for getting started in the position.

Armed with this knowledge, School Liaison Officers can determine how best to move forward and what changes, if any, to make in how they work in their community. The guidebook is written for ALL School Liaison Officers, no matter how many years of experience they have or where they are located. Because of the varied experiences and circumstances of School Liaison Officers, this guidebook is organized so that School Liaison Officers can quickly locate and read about topics and issues that are relevant to their situation. Each School Liaison Officer is encouraged to use the ideas in this guidebook as stepping stones to working effectively within his/her situation. You may need to modify the strategies proposed in this guidebook or to create new strategies to address the issues in your community.



However, it is important for you to know that many of the issues you face also are encountered by other School Liaison Officers. You are not alone, and this guidebook shares the concerns, challenges, and ideas of School Liaison Officers in varied circumstances.

Sources Used for this Guidebook

This guidebook has been prepared under the sponsorship of U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center (CFSC). The content presented in this guidebook is based on:

- A working group session with School Liaison Officers at the 1998 School Liaison Officers Conference
- CFSC and field completion of a School Liaison Officer activities worksheet developed following the School Liaison Officer conference
- On-site interviews with School Liaison Officers, school representatives, garrison commanders, Directorates of Personnel and Community Activities (DPCA), and unit Partnerships in Education (PIE) representatives at three Army installations (Fort Meade, Fort Belvoir, and Fort Hood)
- Telephone interviews with 10 School Liaison Officers worldwide.

Additionally, this guidebook has been reviewed by School Liaison Officers. A list of the individuals who have provided input into this guidebook appears in the Acknowledgements.

II. ORIENTATION TO THE SCHOOL LIAISON OFFICER POSITION



Whether having served as a School Liaison Officer for a short time or a long time, individuals periodically question their roles and responsibilities. Those of you who are new School Liaison Officers are most likely to be wondering what are the expectations of the position. This chapter explains the School Liaison Officer's role in the military community, discusses the importance of this role to garrison command, and highlights the unique circumstances under which different School Liaison Officers operate.

Vision, Mission, and Goals of the School Liaison Officer

The School Liaison Officer position (formerly called the school officer) has existed for many years. The position was originally created to support the Adopt-A-School program (now referred to as Partnerships in Education or PIE). Recently, the Army reexamined the nature of the School Liaison Officer's duties and, in an effort both to implement and expand this position, has put forth the following vision statement.

Vision of the School Liaison Officer's Roles

Coordinate and assist school-age children and youth of Army parents with educational opportunities and information necessary to achieve academic success. To work in partnership with local schools to provide caring adults to enhance the education experience.

This vision statement encompasses three key themes that underpin the School Liaison Officer's role: (1) coordination and communication, (2) assistance to Army parents, and (3) partnerships with local schools. By focusing on these themes, you can fulfill the School Liaison Officer's mission *to provide Garrison Commanders the support and assistance necessary to coordinate and advise Army parents of school-age children on education issues and needs and assist in solving those issues and needs.*

To guide School Liaison Officers' efforts the Army has established the following goals:

- Identify barriers to the academic success of Army family members (primary and secondary education) and develop solutions.
- Promote parent involvement by Army parents of school-age children in their student's education.
- Develop and coordinate Army Partnerships in Education.
- Provide Army parents of school-age children the tools they need to overcome obstacles to education that stem from the military lifestyle.
- Promote and educate local communities and schools on the needs of military children.



The exhibit below summarizes today's expectations of the School Liaison Officer.

School Liaison Officer's Roles and Impact on the Military Community		
School Liaison Officer's Roles		Goal of This Role
Coordinate educational opportunities and information	→	Identify barriers and develop solutions
Assist Army parents	→	Promote parent involvement Provide tools to overcome obstacles of military lifestyle
Work in partnership with local schools	→	Develop and coordinate Army Partnerships in Education Educate schools on military children's needs
↓		
Impact on Military Community: Enhance the education experience and academic success of military children.		

Overview of School Liaison Officer Responsibilities

As a School Liaison Officer, you are the garrison commander's representative to public and defense schools. You face a wide and diverse range of matters concerning schools and military children's education. In most instances, it is NOT your responsibility to "fix" a problem, but to inform and link the individuals or groups that can appropriately address the issue. To solve problems and resolve issues, you work with many parties, including command, families, schools, and other agencies. Further, you wear many hats, including those of advisor, communicator, and coordinator. Thus, as a School Liaison Officer you have the following four major responsibilities:

- Representing, informing, and assisting command
- Assisting military families with school issues
- Interfacing, educating, and coordinating with local school systems
- Forging partnerships between the military and schools.

Each of these areas of responsibility is described in detail in Chapter III.



How School Liaison Officer Circumstances Differ

While all School Liaison Officers are committed to improving military children's school experiences, the circumstances under which School Liaison Officers function vary. Collectively, School Liaison Officers have different backgrounds and work within different environments and with different sized populations. Some of the specific ways in which you may be similar to, or different from, other School Liaison Officers are identified below.

Background and experience. Each individual brings different skills and experience to the School Liaison Officer position, such as:

- Association with the military (both active duty and civilian personnel serve in this position)
- Length of time in the position
- Amount of experience or training in education
- Amount of experience in community relations.

Work environment. School Liaison Officers are located at installations worldwide with different organizational environments, which means that:

- Some have the School Liaison Officer as their only duty, whereas others serve in the position as a collateral duty
- Some School Liaison Officers report directly to the garrison commander and some report to the Director of Community Activities (DCA); reporting directly to the garrison commander is the optimum situation
- School Liaison Officers work under garrison commanders who have varying perceptions of the School Liaison Officer position.

Population size and characteristics. The populations that School Liaison Officers work with can differ in a number of important ways:

- Number of military families with children (including dual-military couples, single parents, DOD civilian personnel, and other Services)
- Number of families with a special needs child (referred to as EFM families)
- Number of school-age children



- Percentage of military children living on the installation
- Size of the civilian school system (number of schools and school districts)
- Number of public schools located on post
- Presence of a military school (DoDDS schools at many overseas locations, DDESS schools at select CONUS locations).

Collectively, these factors influence where and how School Liaison Officers focus their efforts. Every School Liaison Officer will have to consider his/her own particular differences in background and experience, work environment, and command's population size and characteristics to formulate the needs of the community and how best to plan to meet them.

Why the School Liaison Officer is Important to Command

Almost one-half of all military personnel have children. With a sizable percentage of the military population assigned to the installation concerned with children's issues, garrison commanders know that addressing children's issues is critical to supporting the quality of life of military families. However, as "mayor" of the installation, garrison commanders have far-reaching responsibilities both inside and outside the gates of the installation. With responsibilities so broad, a commander must rely heavily on a staff of experts. Some of the garrison commander's experts typically include the chief installation chaplain, judge advocate, surgeon, social worker, public affairs officer, engineer, and so on. The School Liaison Officer is the commander's expert on school-related matters.

As the command's expert you serve as the primary point of contact on the installation for school-related matters. The School Liaison Officer functions as a conduit for information between command and parents and between command and the schools. To serve in this role, it is critical that the School Liaison Officer cultivates collaborative working relationships with the school community and installation agencies as well as connections with military families in order to provide the necessary support to command.

In essence, the School Liaison Officer is the garrison commander's eyes, ears, and hands. A School Liaison Officer enhances the commander's ability to address the needs of school-age military children and helps the commander assess the issues of concern to military families and school systems. Further, the garrison commander relies on the School Liaison Officer to address certain key issues. Last, the School Liaison Officer helps to cultivate and sustain a positive relationship between the military community and the school community. Clearly, the School Liaison Officer fulfills a vital purpose on the military installation and for the military at large.

III. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

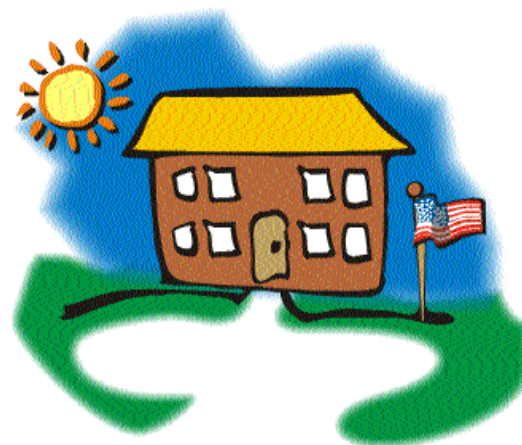


This chapter identifies the major school- and education-related issues School Liaison Officers can expect to encounter and how School Liaison Officers can effectively address these issues in carrying out their responsibilities.

Issues School Liaison Officers Can Expect to Encounter

School Liaison Officers can expect to encounter a diverse range of issues concerning schools and the education of military children. Many, but not all of these issues, will be related to:

- Military lifestyle, especially relocation and deployment
- Regulations and legislation: redistricting, testing (e.g., state mandated standards), curriculum and state graduation requirements, Impact Aid (Federal funds earmarked for school districts that encompass military bases), the Federal school lunch program
- School and community issues: violence, gangs, drugs, discipline, political issues (e.g., religious and cultural observances), school security (e.g., bomb threats), building a public school on a military installation, innovations (e.g., magnet schools, year-round programs, school uniforms), curriculum and curriculum standards, teachers' performance
- School support: transportation/busing, summer camp and special programs, Partnerships in Education (PIE), use of post facilities
- Family support: relocation; conflicts with, or complaints against, school; special needs issues; home schooling; misinformation and preconceived ideas about schools.



To address these issues will require two decisions: (1) Do you get involved? and (2) If yes, what can you do directly or indirectly to address the issue? In many instances, addressing an issue may require you to work with a variety of individuals and thus to have multiple responsibilities.



Identification of School Liaison Officer Responsibilities

School Liaison Officers have the following four key responsibilities:

- Representing, informing, and assisting command
- Assisting military families with school issues
- Interfacing, educating, and coordinating with local school systems
- Forging partnerships between the military and schools.



These areas of responsibility are described in detail in the following sections.



Representing, Informing, and Assisting Command

As the official representative of the military community for school issues, you are expected to handle all school matters. In practice, while command expects you to handle many matters independently (i.e., to work the issue first), there are some matters the commander will not want you to handle or will want you to handle only with guidance from him or her. How these matters are designated at your installation will depend upon your commander's interests, leadership style, perception of the School Liaison Officer role, and working relationship with you.

The following exhibit identifies how a School Liaison Officer's responsibilities in informing and assisting command on school matters are typically demarcated at installations. Based on discussions with School Liaison Officers and installation leadership, three different categories or levels of responsibility emerged. Category 1 identifies issues commonly viewed as areas that School Liaison Officers should not handle. Although the School Liaison Officer is not responsible for addressing these issues or their impact on the military community, the School Liaison Officer does need to advise command on these issues and/or facilitate coordination and communication between the military community and schools. Category 2 lists issues for which School Liaison Officers are encouraged to seek command direction. While again the School Liaison Officer needs to advise the command on these issues as they arise, what the School Liaison Officer will actually do will be determined by command. Category 3 lists issues the School Liaison Officer is expected to handle on his or her own. On these matters, the School Liaison Officer should advise the command, as necessary. In many instances, command can be informed after the fact.



What is School Liaison Officer's Involvement in Education-Related Issues? (i.e., how School Liaison Officer assists command)

Category 1: Command Responsibility (School Liaison Officer informs command and coordinates military-school interchange)	Category 2: School Liaison Officer is Intermediary (School Liaison Officer informs and seeks guidance from command)	Category 3: School Liaison Officer's Responsibility (School Liaison Officer informs command as needed)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Impact Aid ● Soldier acts disrespectfully ● Security (weapon's incidents, bomb threats) ● Construction or safety issues (e.g., road signs on post) ● Bond initiatives ● Legislation ● Policy ● Certain family complaints against school ● School decisions that impact military families (e.g., redistricting) ● Issues involving money and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Policy (Army, installation) ● Sexual abuse ● School violence ● Disruptive behavior in school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family support and school conflict issues (e.g., IEP) ● Relocation and military lifestyle issues ● Partnerships in Education ● Matters that come to commander's attention, if designated by command
<p>Caveat: The issues identified in this exhibit are not an exhaustive listing of all issues a School Liaison Officer will face. The issues listed have been categorized to illustrate that the School Liaison Officer's role in school matters varies. Whether the School Liaison Officer will have to handle a specific issue in his/her community will depend on the level of authority required to address the issue, sensitivity of the issue, time required to handle the issue, and level of involvement of on-post agencies.</p>		

In essence your role is to serve as a conduit of information. You gather and pass on information to command as well as pass on information from command. The ways in which you can support and assist command are described below and in the other sections of this chapter.

WAYS TO ASSIST COMMAND

- ◆ Inform command on parent and community concerns so command is knowledgeable, especially when addressing parents and the community
- ◆ Obtain and report accurate and up-to-date information for command to make informed decisions or to provide the support you need
- ◆ Act as intermediary
- ◆ Assist families directly (see section on *Assisting Military Families with School Issues*)
- ◆ Coordinate with school systems (see section on *Interfacing, Educating, and Coordinating with Local School Systems*)
- ◆ Keep command aware of your efforts.



Informing command on parent and community concerns. The commander will look to you to ensure that he/she has full knowledge of issues and the implications for the military community. You will need to stay current on issues and have a “pulse” on the community. You will also need to determine how best to inform your command group about the issues of concern. Bear in mind that the commander has limited time and thus both written and oral presentations need to be concise.

Reporting accurate and up-to-date information. In order for command to make informed decisions or to be able to support you in your efforts, you will need to report accurate information about an issue/problem and what steps, if any, have been taken to address the issue/problem. Thus, it is important for you to research matters thoroughly and to communicate with all relevant parties/agencies to ensure you have all the pertinent facts. In some cases, it is essential that you be familiar with policies so that you can draft installation procedures, such as is required with in- and out-processing related to schools.

Representing the commander. In all instances you represent the commander and are the primary point of contact for school matters. Thus, the commander expects you to be highly visible in the military and school communities. Your presence at meetings, such as school board and committee meetings, is one way of being visible and also a way of obtaining information on parent and community concerns.

Acting as intermediary. On some issues, you will serve as an intermediary, in which your responsibility is to connect people or to work directly with families and schools on behalf of the command. (The ways in which School Liaison Officers work with families and schools are discussed in other sections of this chapter.) To foster the command’s connections with the parent and school communities, you will need to arrange opportunities for communication to occur. In the case of schools, this may mean arranging meetings with key school officials such as the school superintendent. With regard to parents, you can arrange a town hall meeting with the garrison commander. Alternatively, the commander may ask you to set up a task force (comprising post, school, and parent representatives) to explore key issues of concern in the local community and then to brief the commander periodically on the task force's findings and recommendations.

Keeping command aware of your efforts. By keeping command informed about what you are doing and handling, you establish your credibility as well as convey the community's concerns. You do not always have to inform beforehand; you can inform command after the fact. Also consider using informal methods (such as e-mail, staff summaries, informal chats) to inform command.



In sum, your relationship with command is based on information and communication. Further, the nature of your relationship with command is likely to influence your efforts in working with families, schools, and other community representatives. Thus, it is critical to develop a relationship that enables you to function effectively in your community and within your unique circumstances. The exhibit below offers key strategies for working effectively with command. Remember that with command turnover, you will likely be reeducating and repeating these strategies with each incoming command.

Strategies for Working with Command Effectively

- ★ Explain to command the School Liaison Officer's role
- ★ Understand command's expectations of you
- ★ Identify which issues command needs to be involved in
- ★ Understand command philosophy
- ★ Be visible
- ★ Keep open communication with command
- ★ Be proactive in learning about issues (read local newspapers, talk with people, attend meetings, and find other ways to take the pulse of the community)
- ★ Be prepared to provide accurate and up-to-date information
- ★ Know resources
- ★ Obtain and be familiar with key documents such as legislation and policies
- ★ Know Army policy, operations, and structure.



Assisting Military Families with School Issues

All of your work as a School Liaison Officer is aimed at assisting military families with children. This section of the guidebook addresses the ways that you can assist families directly, first by describing the responsibilities associated with this role and then by offering strategies for success.

Assisting families involves a number of inter-related activities on the part of the School Liaison Officer. The cornerstone activities are providing information and making referrals. While these activities meet the needs of many military families, some military families need additional forms of assistance. If the School Liaison Officer does not provide that assistance, it is likely that these families' needs will go unmet. The activities that School Liaison Officers engage in to assist families are described below:

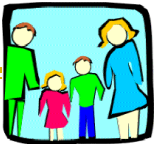
Providing information. Occasionally families will request information from you, but more often you will need to reach out to families to provide information on key issues using printed media and other formats.

Making referrals. You can expect that families will need information specific to their situation. Thus, you will need to research an issue and then provide them with a point of contact by giving them a referral.

Educating families. To help parents work with, and maneuver within, the school system, you must educate them on the education process, school organization, communication and interaction strategies, and other matters.

Offering personal support. In some situations, you will find yourself serving as a source of personal support by being a trustworthy, attentive listener and sounding board.

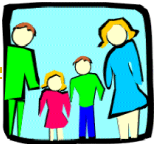
Encouraging parents to advocate for their children. To advocate is to plead for or defend. Typically, families need an advocate within the school system. Your goal is to empower families using support, education, and referrals so they can advocate for themselves. Be aware that for you to serve as an advocate can place you in a highly delicate situation in that, as the commander's representative, your first customer is the military. You should not function as a family's advocate if doing so conflicts with your obligation to the command. If you have questions about serving as an advocate, seek guidance from your supervisor or the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate (SJA).



Mediating on behalf of families. To mediate is to intervene between parties in a dispute, to referee, or to facilitate a reconciliation. Often, by the time mediation is required in a situation, intense emotion is blocking one or both parties' ability to communicate effectively. Your role is to serve as an honest broker and restore communication, typically between the school and parents. This may involve making telephone calls or holding a meeting with both parties. Like the advocate, the mediator strives to resolve a particular problem; unlike the advocate, however, the mediator's stance is neutral.

The information and assistance that families need tends to be related to where they are in the permanent change of station (PCS), or rotation, cycle. Using the phases of the rotation cycle as a framework, the sections that follow illustrate some of the issues that families may experience and how you as a School Liaison Officer can assist them.





Prior to Arrival

Families with PCS orders try to anticipate what their children's schooling will be like at the next installation. Some hope to choose where they will live based on school factors. As such, they have a multitude of questions (see Exhibit A for a list of frequently asked questions). Your job is to provide information. Ways to do this include:

WAYS TO ASSIST FAMILIES: PRIOR TO ARRIVAL

- ◆ Assemble pertinent information and provide to Army Community Service (ACS) to ensure that Welcome Packets sent to incoming families include as much literature as possible about the local schools, to include an eye-catching advertisement for "How to Contact Your School Liaison Officer." Update the Welcome Packet information at least annually.
- ◆ Contact chains of command to educate newcomer sponsors about the assistance you offer, or include that information in the ACS sponsorship training.
- ◆ When a large cohort or entire unit is moving to your installation, consider traveling to their location before they PCS to brief them as a group, distribute literature, and answer questions. (Your installation may send an entire team of installation/community representatives, including realtor, housing manager, ACS representative, etc.).
- ◆ Have information about the assistance you offer included on the installation's Web site.
- ◆ Develop and maintain your own Web site, which is linked to the installation's Web site, to inform families about what is happening in the local schools, school records, school performance, policies, and other important information.



Exhibit A

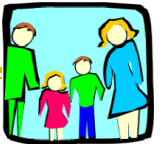
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS BY INCOMING FAMILIES

General Questions

- What primary, middle, and secondary schools do children living on post attend?
- What primary, middle, and secondary schools do children living off post attend?
- When does school start?
- How old must children be to start school?
- Are the schools safe?
- What is the quality of the various schools on and off post?
- How do students perform on standardized tests? (Do you have profiles or report cards for the schools?) Are there problems with gangs, violence, or drugs? Which schools are most highly regarded?
- Which schools do most of the installation children attend?
- How far is the walk or bus ride to and from school?
- What are the boundaries for the various off-post schools?
- What is the registration procedure?
- What kinds of after-school programs are available?

Specific Questions

- What is the core curriculum for the district/state?
- What are school health regulations and requirements for registration?
- What is the procedure to apply for specialized services such as Special Education, Gifted and Talented Services, or speech therapy?
- What type of scheduling do the middle and secondary schools use?
- What are the course requirements for high school graduation?
- Who is the point of contact to determine whether high school credits earned elsewhere will be accepted in your state?
- Who is the point of contact for home schooling policy and procedure?
- What are the private school options in the area?

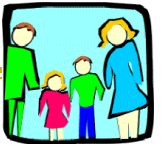


Upon Arrival

Some families upon arrival may indicate that they did not receive any information prior to arriving at the installation. Even families who did receive information are likely to have questions. Further, newly arrived families can face specific challenges. Issues of concern to incoming families can include: finding summer activities for children, finding hourly child care, figuring out which school to register for while in temporary lodging, and determining how to avoid changing schools when moving from temporary to permanent quarters. Most of these needs can be addressed through information and referral.

WAYS TO ASSIST FAMILIES: UPON ARRIVAL

- ◆ Be a regular participant in the installation newcomers' orientation.
- ◆ Invite a local school representative to attend and talk at the installation's newcomers' orientation.
- ◆ Obtain information on summer programs offered on and off post (e.g., Youth Recreation, Child Development Services (CDS), the local community's recreation office) and develop a handout to distribute and serve as ready reference material for callers.
- ◆ Regarding school registration, educate families on the local policy and their options. If families subsequently find the schools uncooperative, provide an appropriate referral within the school administrative hierarchy. If they continue to be unsuccessful, offer to contact the school on their behalf.
- ◆ Provide newcomer information on bulletin boards and counters at strategic locations such as the schools, temporary lodging facility, ACS, and welcome center. Also, provide newcomer information for family support group (FSG) newsletters.



While Stationed at Your Installation

Once children are established in their schools, families may face a new set of issues such as: real or perceived hostility or resentment from local children, bias against military families or lack of understanding on the part of school staff or faculty, policies that disadvantage transients (e.g., not permitting new students to play junior varsity or varsity sports), and conflicts with the school that may not necessarily be related to a family's military status (e.g., accessing specialized services for special needs children). Ways to address each of these issues are provided in the following exhibit.

WAYS TO ASSIST FAMILIES: WHILE STATIONED AT YOUR INSTALLATION

- ◆ For families whose children find the local children either unaccepting or hostile, educate them about the dynamics that may be at play (e.g., cultural differences in a largely Hispanic community, jealousy in a poor community), give them statistics about incident frequency if they are concerned about safety, identify who they should contact in the school system if they continue to be concerned, and advocate on their behalf as necessary and appropriate.
- ◆ For families who find school personnel unsympathetic or biased toward military families, provide personal support; explain school policy to them; identify who they should contact within the school hierarchy to try to work out the issue themselves (e.g., if they cannot come to an understanding with the classroom teacher, talk with the principal, or if the guidance counselor is not helpful, seek out his or her superior); and mediate if necessary. (If the problem is not an isolated one, inform the parent you will offer to provide the school an in-service training; see *Interfacing, Educating, and Coordinating with the Local School System*.)
- ◆ When children seem to be denied opportunities as a result of being transient, identify whom parents should contact within the school hierarchy to learn whether or not the decision made regarding their child conforms with official policy. If it does not, encourage the parents to stand up for their child. If it does, explore, or support the parents' efforts to explore, whether an exception to policy may be possible. Also inform command of the issue and, if appropriate, work with command to lobby for a policy change to protect the interests of all military children who move to your installation.
- ◆ For families having trouble accessing specialized education-related services, refer them to key personnel within the school system and advocate for them as necessary and appropriate. Also, offer to attend Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings to reassure the family that the school is treating them fairly.



When Preparing To Depart

Departing families have questions regarding how to transfer school records to the schools at their new location. These families will also have questions about schools at their new location. Ways to address these issues include:

WAYS TO ASSIST FAMILIES: WHEN PREPARING TO DEPART

- ◆ Advise families of the procedure for transferring school records or refer them to the appropriate points of contact. Also encourage families to get a copy of their children's school records to take with them.
- ◆ Give families the name and contact information for the School Liaison Officer at the next installation (call headquarters if necessary). Refer the family to SITES (Standard Installation Topic Exchange Service) and Web sites for school information.
- ◆ Inform soldiers and families about out-processing procedures related to their children's school. (Note: Read DA policy on In- and Out-Processing in Volume 2 to be familiar with the School Liaison Officer's responsibilities in this area.)



In sum, your primary focus is on obtaining and providing information to families on key issues of concern. However, in some instances, you will need to contact and work with school personnel directly to address a family's specific circumstances. The exhibit below offers key strategies that can enhance your efforts in assisting families effectively.

Strategies for Assisting Families Effectively

- ★ Continue to build and update your network of contacts, especially with the schools, so you can provide useful referrals to families.
- ★ Be familiar with current state and local school policy (e.g., families may not know that local schools are obligated to let suspended students stay current with their school work).
- ★ Know and stay abreast of disability regulations (e.g., Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA).
- ★ Know and stay abreast of key military regulations (e.g., in- and out-processing).
- ★ Be discreet with the personal information you learn about both children and their parents. Keep command informed, as necessary.
- ★ Share information with other agencies when it can prevent further problems (e.g., if you've heard that there have been fights in the housing area, forewarn the school transportation office that there could be problems on the bus, or if there have been fights at school, notify the Military Police that there could be trouble on post).
- ★ Focus on using information, education, referral, and support to empower families to be self-advocates rather than rushing to advocate for them. In other words, rather than supplying a solution to one particular problem, focus on providing parents with tools that they can use again in the future.
- ★ Understand what your superiors expect of you. At some installations the School Liaison Officer is expected to provide only information and referrals to families, whereas at other installations advocacy and/or mediation are the norm.

How you as a School Liaison Officer choose to assist families depends on many factors, such as the nature of the need, the parameters your supervisor has established for you, the amount of time you can devote to an issue, your skill level, your comfort level, and how resourceful the parents are themselves. The guidance in this section is intended to serve as a roadmap by helping you to anticipate issues you are likely to face and to prepare for the ways in which you can assist families.



Interfacing, Educating, and Coordinating with Local School Systems

The School Liaison Officer's ability to inform, interface, and coordinate effectively with school personnel is vital to the installation's success in addressing school issues. This section describes many of the School Liaison Officer's activities involved in educating and coordinating with school systems and provides suggestions for how to perform these activities successfully.

The activities associated with the role of interfacing, educating, and coordinating with local school systems are quite broad and, in some instances, may overlap with other roles and responsibilities discussed in this chapter. Under this role, activities focus on two areas:

- Educating and informing school personnel on topics related to the needs of military children and their families
- Coordinating with and assisting schools in meeting military children's needs.

Educating and Informing School Personnel

A list of ways in which you can educate and inform school personnel is provided in the exhibit below. Additional information pertaining to these activities follows after the exhibit.

WAYS TO EDUCATE AND INFORM SCHOOL PERSONNEL

- ◆ Provide information when attending school board meetings.
- ◆ Develop and provide written materials, seminars, and training (e.g., AFTB Level I) to school personnel.
- ◆ Coordinate monthly meetings with guidance counselors, other school staff, and military representatives to address emerging issues and issues influencing military children's education (e.g., overcrowding, busing). Also meet periodically with school principals and school superintendents.
- ◆ Hold an open house for school staff to show what installation resources (e.g., museum, military units) are available for schools to use.



School board meetings. Given that board membership in public schools is based on elections or appointments, you will not be a voting member of the school board. However, regular attendance at school board meetings as a representative of the command provides an opportunity to inform school board officials about military issues. It also allows you to hear about parents' and school's concerns to address with command. Contact the school superintendent's office for a schedule of meetings and to find out how to get on the board's agenda, when necessary.

School Liaison Officers working with DDESS schools also attend school board meetings, while School Liaison Officers in DoDDS schools attend school advisory committee (SAC) meetings. Participation in military school meetings is important to hear about parents' and school's concerns.

Training and educational materials. Many school personnel are not aware of the challenges faced by military children (e.g., deployment and relocation). School personnel can benefit from receiving information and/or training on the impact of the military lifestyle on children and strategies that can facilitate children's adjustment in the school and during stressful periods related to deployment and relocation. Additionally, school personnel may encounter difficulties trying to reach parents of military children. For example, they may not know who to consult when a single parent is deployed. They often also don't know how to contact and work with the Army chain of command to communicate with deployed parents, if necessary.

To educate school personnel on these issues, consider coordinating a Military Child Conference attended by a diverse range of school personnel (e.g., guidance counselors, teachers, and principals). At this conference, you can address a variety of issues including special needs children and the effects of deployment and relocation on children. This would also be an appropriate forum for providing Army Family Team Building (AFTB) Level I training or the training can be conducted as a stand alone. This training is designed to educate individuals about the military, especially the military lifestyle/culture, military organization, military protocol and customs, and installation agencies. Also at any conference or training you can share information about the installation demographics and discuss key deployment-related topics such as Family Care Plans.

Meetings with school personnel. Given the importance of "information" in your position as School Liaison Officer, you will find it beneficial to meet regularly with school personnel. In order to have ongoing contact, it may be necessary for you to initiate formal or informal meetings with school personnel. Meetings, whether steering committee meetings, socials, or other types of formal and/or informal meetings, allow for information sharing and help to establish two-way communication between you and school personnel that will be vital to your success as a School Liaison Officer. A by-product of these meetings will be the relationships that are fostered between you and the superintendent, principals, counselors and other school staff, PTA/PTO presidents, and school board members. To these individuals you will not merely be "the School Liaison Officer" but will become an associate and partner. Similarly, these individuals will become "partners" in your efforts to assist military children.



Open house. Hold an open house for school officials to inform school personnel about the installation's resources. Provide tours of installation facilities that are available for school use, such as library services, nature trails, and recreational facilities, depending upon the resources at your installation. In addition, an open house provides an opportunity to discuss the family support services available. In hosting this type of event, you are making needed resources available, a good will gesture that will likely foster a more effective working relationship and cooperation with schools.

Coordinating with and Assisting Schools

In the exhibit below are examples of the various ways that School Liaison Officers can coordinate with and assist schools in matters of concern to schools. For some of these activities, you will work with command, agencies, and parents; for others, you will work directly with a school.

WAYS TO COORDINATE WITH AND ASSIST SCHOOLS

Working with Command, Agencies, and Parents on Behalf of Schools

- ◆ Arrange for Military Police to assist schools with anti-crime and drug prevention programs (e.g., McGruff, DARE).
- ◆ Educate families on how to address school issues and requirements during in- and out-processing (see section in this chapter on *Assisting Military Families with School Issues*).
- ◆ Coordinate, through command, a school's request for space on post for school events (e.g., field day, proms).
- ◆ Intervene on schools' behalf when school is located on the installation and having difficulty obtaining assistance from installation agencies such as Directorate of Public Works (DPW).
- ◆ Coordinate Partnerships in Education (PIE) program that arranges for military units to contribute resources and services to schools. (Further information about PIE appears in the section on forging partnerships.)
- ◆ OCONUS only, work with Civilian Misconduct staff to coordinate resources for discipline problems in the school and community.

Working Directly with Schools

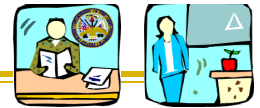
- ◆ Communicate with schools on the placement of special needs children arriving at the installation.
- ◆ Get information/statistics about schools (e.g., test scores, curricula, scholarships) that needs to be disseminated to military families, especially those arriving at the installation.
- ◆ Determine with schools their requirements for school enrollment and departure that need to be provided to incoming and outgoing military families.
- ◆ Identify with schools how to get information on immunization requirements and school physicals to parents.
- ◆ Talk with schools about installation events and military operations to assist schools in developing school calendars.



In sum, interfacing and establishing a relationship with schools as well as assisting schools in a variety of matters will help to resolve and address certain educational issues. Further, it will enable you to facilitate the command's relationship with the school community. The exhibit below offers key strategies that can enhance your efforts to cultivate and maintain a positive relationship with school systems.

Strategies for Working with Schools Effectively

- ★ Make installation resources available and get leadership and parents involved in school matters. This support can be offered through: providing materials to schools, arranging the school's use of installation facilities, arranging interface with high-ranking military personnel, encouraging parent involvement in children's schooling and school events, and coordinating Partnerships in Education (PIE). (Further information on these ways to foster partnership with schools appears in the section entitled *Forging Partnerships Between the Military and Schools*.)
- ★ For CONUS commands served by public schools, be knowledgeable about Impact Aid and how the funding affects your local school districts. In Volume 2 of this guidebook is a handout entitled "The Basics of Impact Aid," which will provide an information guide to the funding and procedures of the Federal law for Impact Aid.
- ★ Ensure that schools are receiving the maximum Impact Aid (Federal funding earmarked for school districts that encompass military bases) possible. This can be done by:
 - Encouraging all military families to complete and submit Impact Aid forms
 - Suggesting schools include blocks for specifying military status and pay grade on their registration forms
 - Providing schools with Impact Aid worksheets if they don't already have them
 - Providing schools with post statistics to gauge the extent to which eligible children are accounted for.
- ★ Keep school officials updated and informed of military "goings on" that affect schools.
- ★ "Get smart" on school systems, policies, and organizational structure.



Forging Partnerships and Linkages Between the Military and Schools



One of the roles of the School Liaison Officer is to forge partnerships between the military and schools. As was stated earlier in this guidebook under the section on why the School Liaison Officer is important to command, a harmonious relationship between the installation and the surrounding civilian community is vital to handling school matters effectively and meeting the needs of military school-age children. The partnerships and relationships with schools that the School Liaison Officer develops and coordinates play a key role in facilitating the overall relationship between the military community and the school system and thus have a direct influence on the quality of military children's education. Hence, the partnership between the military and schools truly is a “win-win” situation for both parties, with the ultimate winner being the military child.

The primary means through which you as the School Liaison Officer can link the installation with the schools is through the Partnerships in Education (PIE) program, or what sometimes is called the Adopt-A-School program. This section describes the activities involved under PIE as well as identifies other innovations or ways the School Liaison Officer can foster linkages with schools. In some instances, the ways in which you can support schools is by coordinating with other agencies and facilitating relationships between schools and others. The reasons for establishing partnerships with installation and community agencies are therefore also discussed. To assist efforts in creating these diverse partnerships, a planning tool is provided in Exhibit B.

Partnerships in Education (PIE)

Partnerships in Education (also referred to as Adopt-A-School at some locations) is an initiative in which businesses and military installations contribute resources and services to schools. The School Liaison Officer primarily supports this program in his or her local community by providing coordination. To coordinate efforts involves: (1) assessing the needs of individual schools on- and off-post as well as the needs of the units at the installation, and (2) determining what the schools and units have to offer one another with respect to meeting their mutual needs. With this information, you can then determine how to pair or match one or more units with schools in the community. Bear in mind that in all likelihood, not all units at the installation or schools in the community will agree to participate in this program. However, Army policy does allow service members to work in schools during duty time (see Volume 2 of this guidebook).



Exhibit B

QUESTIONS FOR CREATING A PARTNERSHIP PLAN

Use these questions to help focus the partnership efforts and activities in order to create a successful partnership plan.

- What is (are) the goal(s) of our partnership?
- What community needs are we addressing through our partnership?
- What activities/events/partnerships can help us reach our goal(s)?
- Who will be involved in helping to reach the goal(s)?

Name of community organization, school, units and other groups	Representative Name	Contact Information

- How will we know if we have reached our goal(s)?
- What are the indicators of success?



Once you have paired units and schools, you will need to help the partners determine how they can support each other. A two-way partnership is recommended, as it creates a "win-win" situation that will likely serve to sustain efforts. Examples of the types of activities that units and schools can partner in include:

- Academic—units can identify personnel who are willing to provide one-on-one assistance to students via tutoring or mentoring; units can send personnel to assist with reading, academic contests, geography, and literacy programs
- Enrichment—units can provide personnel for story telling, Gifted and Talented Programs (TAG), and fairs/demonstrations
- Prevention—units can jointly participate with schools in prevention programs or initiatives focusing on crime prevention, drug and alcohol awareness, and stay-in-school campaigns
- Career—units can provide personnel who are willing to let students job shadow or who are willing to serve as speakers on career day at school
- Special Interest—units can sponsor or participate in cultural events and field trips; units can provide personnel who can provide technical assistance to students on the use of computers or computer repair assistance to schools
- Support Activities—units can provide personnel to assist with awards presentations or provide personnel for color guard presentations
- Social—units can participate in field days, recognition ceremonies, and celebrations.

While this is not an exhaustive list of PIE activities, it gives you a flavor for the types of things you can help to facilitate in your community. To build and sustain the successful operation of PIE, it is important to do the following:

- Consider factors such as unit size, availability of unit personnel, unit mobility, and level and type of school needs, when assigning units to schools.
- Emphasize equity in the partnership.
- Monitor the partnerships after you get them started rather than manage each partnership. Have both the units and schools assign points of contact who can handle the details such as individual assignments and attendance.
- Emphasize "brain" over "brawn." Partnerships are more than units installing playground equipment or helping clean school yards. Encourage innovative ways to make use of service members' skills and abilities.



Other Innovations

Many innovative ideas have been employed to create and establish positive linkages between the military and schools. Below are a few examples of the innovative approaches being used at various installations.

Hospitality. Social functions provide an opportunity for enhancing relationships, fostering communication, and recognizing efforts. Three types of social events are described here. One idea is to host an annual teacher appreciation reception at the beginning of the school year. School district superintendents as well as principals and other staff of schools would be invited. A second idea is to host an annual teacher recognition day. A third idea is to host an annual PIE social attended by teachers, school representatives, unit representatives, and battalion commanders. This social could be used to recognize contributions and talk about other ways schools and units can assist one another.

Access to high-ranking military personnel. School officials in the civilian community often appreciate the opportunity to interface with influential military personnel (i.e., installation leadership). As the School Liaison Officer, you can facilitate this interaction by organizing social functions, arranging meetings, and by inviting school officials and military personnel to serve on joint military/local steering committees.

Material support. You can serve as a conduit for making available to schools technical equipment that command no longer needs. The Director of Information Management (DOIM) is the source of this equipment and is the office with which you will likely need to coordinate. Stay abreast of available equipment that can go to the schools. Maintain a list of each school system's technology POC and stay in touch with them to learn technology requirements. Sharing something as basic as keyboards that are being discarded is greatly appreciated when children otherwise must use cardboard simulations to learn keyboarding.

Individual volunteers. Schools often need volunteers. While PIE provides one source of volunteers, identifying individual service members or family members who are willing to volunteer is also helpful. The Installation Volunteer Coordinator (IVC) can help identify individuals, but it also is important to keep your eyes and ears open. In so doing, you can help schools recruit individual volunteers to work with at-risk problem children who need tutoring or a mentor.

Connections with community and state offices. As a School Liaison Officer you can facilitate school districts' connections with community and state offices. Through these connections, school districts can become involved in, and benefit from community projects (such as a community-sponsored reading program or AmeriCorps) and state committees and grants. Schools can seek grants from states willing to fund initiatives to address educational issues. Because these connections provide needed resources to schools and can enhance your knowledge of issues, these efforts are very valuable.



Working with On-Post Agencies

There are other agencies on an installation that address military families' needs. It is important to establish relationships with these agencies to determine how you can coordinate efforts to serve military children and families. Three key agencies to consider working with are Army Community Service (ACS), Medical Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP), and Children and Youth Services (CYS). Two particular programs under CYS, School Age Services and Youth Services, are two services in which coordination may be particularly needed.

Army Community Service (ACS). Given that ACS provides a variety of services to support military families including deployment support, relocation assistance, and assistance to families with special needs children (EFM families), it is important that you connect with ACS. Additionally, establishing a linkage between ACS and school systems will be helpful. Collectively, these efforts can be used to coordinate the following efforts:

- Having ACS staff "spread the word" in communicating key school concerns to service members and unit leadership they are able to reach
- Arranging for ACS staff to serve as speakers or provide training to school staff on the military lifestyle and its impact on children
- Having schools provide important school information (e.g., enrollment, immunization requirements, curriculum) that can be included in the information ACS disseminates to incoming and outgoing military families.

Medical Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP). Having contact with EFMP is important since the EFMP in the Medical Treatment Facility (MTF) conducts screenings and evaluations for families with special needs children. While these evaluations are separate and distinct from the school's assessments, there may be a need to share information for appropriate school placement of a child.

School Age Services (SAS). In order to make schools aware of the installation's before and after school programs and services provided by SAS and to facilitate logistical issues, such as transportation between schools and SAS, you need to work with SAS. In establishing a relationship with SAS, you can also facilitate communication between SAS and the schools. This communication can be helpful in addressing common concerns, such as finding ways to deal with behavioral problems (especially for those children served by both the school and SAS) and to work effectively with parents. Establishing a linkage between SAS and the school system is one element in dealing with military children and family issues.



Youth Services (YS). Consider hosting a meeting involving the Youth Services Coordinator and school personnel (e.g., principals, counselors) to discuss ways that Youth Services and schools can work together to address the needs of military children. Two particular areas that should be discussed are the adjustment of military children newly arrived to the area and the family separations experienced during service member/unit deployments.

It is also important to establish a relationship with Youth Services to discuss other military family concerns. Special populations, such as families opting to home school their children, may need assistance coordinating with Youth Services to get needed services. In the case of home schoolers, there is a need for services that meet physical education requirements.

Working with Off-Post Agencies

Establishing linkages with various community agencies (including businesses and Chamber of Commerce) are vital to obtaining needed resources for schools. For example, the Chamber of Commerce can assist in arranging facilities for socials, such as teacher recognition day.



Strategies for Success

Tips on how to effectively assist command, parents and schools are presented in the preceding sections. Briefly, to be successful requires that you:

- Establish clear expectations of your role
- Be visible and accessible within the military and school communities
- Maintain ongoing communication with command and schools
- Know the issues
- Be familiar with military and school policies and structure as well as Federal regulations
- Keep command, parents, and schools informed
- Work with the appropriate parties to coordinate efforts to address issues.

Your level of success, however, depends upon establishing the necessary skills, abilities, and resources. The following steps can help provide you with the means of carrying out the responsibilities of a School Liaison Officer effectively. These steps include:

- Building and maintaining a network in the military community
- Building and maintaining a network in the school community
- Gaining support from the community
- Marketing
- Maintaining a log and files
- Obtaining key reference documents
- Training.

Each of these steps is described in the following sections. New School Liaison Officers should also see Chapter IV on *Getting Started as a School Liaison Officer*.

Building Your Installation Network

Your installation network consists of family support agencies, installation operations and support agencies, and other key individuals and groups associated with the installation. A brief overview of each group follows. For a list of these agencies and individuals and how to locate them, see Chapter V entitled *Contacts and Resources*.



Family support agencies. A number of installation agencies have a mission similarly focused on the welfare of military families and children. These agencies can be a valuable resource for ideas and contacts to aid in addressing children's issues. Further, they have informational materials for military families and lists of contacts within their agency, units, and off the installation. You will find these materials and directories useful when you are assisting families and schools, arranging educational training for school staff, and preparing informational materials for military families. Be aware that these agencies may not know about the School Liaison Officer position, and thus you may need to educate them about your job. In sum, establish a friendly, collaborative relationship in which you keep each other abreast of issues, share referrals and materials, market one another, and coordinate services on behalf of military children.

Installation operations and support agencies. There are activities or departments on an installation that you will need to coordinate with in addressing particular school matters. Working with these departments is also essential for providing material support and other assistance to garner school support (see section on *Forging Partnerships Between the Military and Schools*).

Key individuals and groups. Also expand your network by knowing other key players at an installation. These key players include command spouses and Family Support Group (FSG) leaders. These individuals have firsthand knowledge and experience with military family issues and thus can help you maintain a "pulse" on the community. A good way to introduce yourself to these individuals or groups is by introducing yourself at one of their regular gatherings. For example, senior spouses typically gather for monthly information meetings that are referred to as "Command and Staff Coffees," "Information Exchange," or something similar.

Building Your School Network

As a School Liaison Officer, you are a bridge between military families and schools. To address many school issues will require you to coordinate with various school staff at the school and district levels and on some occasions, to contact the state level as well. These school personnel need to know that they can turn to you for help regarding a military child's situation and as the primary contact for the installation. You, in turn, want to know that these school and state contacts are willing to help you when there is a school-related question or issue about policy, laws, and regulations. If you are dealing with many school districts or schools in your area, focus your energies on networking with those most heavily populated by military children.

To form a relationship with local school personnel, call and set up a meeting to introduce yourself and your mission and to explore how you might best be able to help one another. Another way to network with school personnel is invite them to a reception hosted by the garrison commander and attended by key installation personnel. While the reception is less personal than a one-on-one meeting, it shows the level of command interest in school issues. Consider hosting a reception each year to sustain this network.



Gaining Support from the Community

You will be better positioned to help all of your customers—command, military families, and schools—if you have leverage (or power). As a School Liaison Officer, your leverage is likely to be based on your connections and reputation in the community rather than decision-making authority. The better established and larger your network, the more leverage you have. Establishing a strong, positive reputation in both the military and school communities depends on many factors including: your ability to talk using “school” and “military” terminology, level of knowledge on issues, the ways in which you assist and support individuals, your accessibility, and your responsiveness to issues. It takes time to establish your reputation and credibility in a community. Collectively, these factors will determine the level of support you receive from command and schools. Their support is critical to your efforts. Two strategies that can help to establish command and school support are:

- Creating a steering committee
- Attending public school board meetings.

Creating a steering committee. Establishing a steering committee is a way to enlist command involvement and, subsequently, their support. If you decide to establish such a committee, begin by identifying interested garrison officials and senior spouses. It is a good idea to have the garrison commander or his/her representative be a member of your steering committee and to seek participation by civilian school officials. Your committee should meet quarterly or semi-annually.

The involvement of both command and school officials on your steering committee will likely get buy-in to efforts, establish working relationships, and provide you with greater support in your dealings with school personnel and installation agencies. A steering committee may be particularly appropriate if you feel you need more command support, or if you are dealing with a particularly large number of children and schools.

Attending public school board meetings. Most public school boards are elected, and most school board meetings are open to the public. (In many states, boards may hold closed “executive sessions” to address a short list of topics such as litigation, student disciplinary actions, and personnel matters.) Getting to know individual school board members and attending school board meetings regularly are helpful ways to monitor policies and issues. Your presence at these meetings and contacts can help gain public recognition for concerns about military children’s education. There are two ways to work with the board. First, get on a meeting agenda so that you can introduce yourself to the board and community and explain your role. In this manner, you can encourage the board and school administrators to think of you as a resource and a point of access to the local military community. If you wish to be more involved, you can find out if the board appoints citizens to special committees or task forces and volunteer to serve as your command’s representative.



For additional ideas on ways to obtain military and school support, see the preceding sections of this chapter on strategies for working effectively with command, schools, and families as well as the section on *Forging Partnerships Between the Military and Schools*.

Marketing

A School Liaison Officer's success depends on people knowing that you exist and what you do. Marketing is one means of making the community aware of you and will likely be the first step in building the networks described above. Marketing should focus on your customers as well as all potential contacts that can serve as resources to you, including:

- Chain of command (installation and unit level leadership)
- School systems (state and district levels and each local school)
- Military families
- Installation agencies and programs.

Chain of command. The purpose of marketing to installation leadership is to inform leadership of your role and how you can serve as a valuable resource in addressing school issues. For further information on establishing a relationship with command, see the section on *Representing, Informing, and Assisting Command*. The focus of marketing efforts with unit leadership is twofold: (1) to inform them of your role and how you can assist families so that they can pass this information on to service members in their command and (2) to encourage their participation in the Partnerships in Education (PIE) program. Strategies for meeting the first objective might include initially providing brochures and seeking invitations to speak at commander briefings and senior non-commissioned officers (NCO) briefings and later sending periodic notices and updates via e-mail to unit chain of command (i.e., battalion and company commanders, S1s, and First Sergeants). To meet the second objective, you will need to visit each unit or to arrange to speak at a commander's call. In the latter case, it may also be helpful to have the garrison commander speak on this issue in his or her briefings to unit leadership. Having the garrison commander talk about the program will indicate command support for the program and thus is likely to increase the level of response you get.

School systems. The purpose of marketing to school systems is to inform them of your role and how you can assist in addressing certain school matters, especially those concerning military children. Initially, contact can be made by setting up introductory meetings, making visits to tour schools, and hosting a reception at the installation. However, it is essential to maintain ongoing contact through periodic school visits and communications by phone and/or e-mail with school principals to keep schools aware of you. These efforts need to be repeated with turnover in school personnel. For additional ideas



on how to enhance your relationship with schools, see the sections on *Interfacing, Educating, and Coordinating with Local School Systems* and *Forging Partnerships Between the Military and Schools*. Bear in mind that schools can also assist you in your marketing efforts with military families by serving as an intermediary and passing on information to families. Therefore, consider giving them brochures about the School Liaison Officer position and informational materials on key issues that you have developed. Also, make arrangements with schools to have a booth or table at certain school events such as “back to school night” and “open house” for families and in-service training for school personnel to have opportunities to introduce yourself to school personnel and families.

Military families. Use diverse ways to inform military families about you and to enhance your visibility by:

- Having a brochure about the School Liaison Officer position included in the ACS Welcome packets
- Posting information about yourself on the installation's Web page or link your own Web page to the installation's Web site
- Serving as a regular speaker at the ACS newcomers' orientation (welcome briefing)
- Speaking at community gatherings such as mayoral meetings, town hall meetings, and community action council meetings
- Addressing spouse groups such as command and staff spouses, women's clubs, and family support groups
- Speaking at deployment briefings
- Making announcements in the installation newspaper and on the military closed-circuit TV channel
- Providing information to schools for inclusion in schools' or school districts' newsletters
- Posting flyers at strategic installation locations such as the hospital, commissary, thrift shop, ACS, child development centers, and on-post schools
- Staffing a booth or table during school events attended by military parents.

Installation agencies and programs. Marketing efforts in this area should focus on family support agencies. It is important to market to installation family support agencies to inform these agencies (ACS, AFAP, etc.) who you are, to establish these contacts early, and to garner their support. There is less of a need to market to installation support agencies as you will be establishing these contacts as situations arise.



Maintaining a Log and Files

By keeping a log of issues and problems you address, you will have a better sense of the frequency and level of importance of issues. As a result, you can then determine what information you need to provide to families. In addition, a log and other files can be a valuable resource to the next person who will serve as the School Liaison Officer when you leave.

Obtaining Key Documents

To be knowledgeable about a range of topics and issues requires that you obtain and become familiar with certain key documents. A list of these documents and where to get them is provided in Chapter V entitled *Contacts and Resources*.

Training

In serving as a School Liaison Officer, you may be carrying out responsibilities and performing functions that you have had little experience in doing. Being a School Liaison Officer will require demonstrating skills in the following areas: networking, communication, interpersonal relations and establishing partnerships, coordination, publications development, public speaking and briefings, conflict resolution, outreach (i.e., working out in the community), and information collection and management. While you are likely to learn a lot on the job, consider getting training that addresses those areas in which you may require greater expertise, and networking with other School Liaison Officers to exchange ideas. Training and networking opportunities can be found by examining local university and community college class listings, attending School Liaison Officer conferences conducted by Headquarters, and reviewing the Family Member Education Web site (under development at the time this guidebook was written).

IV. GETTING STARTED AS A SCHOOL LIAISON OFFICER



Starting a new job can be daunting, depending on the circumstances. You may or may not have the benefit of a predecessor or supervisor to help you get started. This section describes nine preliminary steps that will help every new School Liaison Officer get off to a good start:

- Establishing leadership's expectations
- Selecting and setting up the work space
- Gathering information about military children and local schools
- Reviewing School Liaison Officer files
- Learning key school policies and terminology
- Learning basic military customs and terminology
- Learning about local school-related issues
- Visiting and touring schools
- Finding a mentor and peer support.

As a new School Liaison Officer, it is vital that you accomplish each of these steps. Additional steps to further bolster and sustain your success are provided in the section entitled *Strategies for Success* in Chapter III. A list of key contacts and reference documents is provided in Chapter V.

Establishing Leadership's Expectations

As in any job, it is critical that you and your supervisor and superiors share the same understanding of what your job entails. In some cases, bosses will take the initiative to talk with you about your job. In other cases, you may have to initiate that discussion yourself. It is especially critical that you and the garrison commander reach a mutual understanding because, as the installation School Liaison Officer, you are his/her representative and you work for him/her. To ascertain the commander's expectations, determine the following:

- Command's familiarity with what a School Liaison Officer does. You may need to educate your commander about the School Liaison Officer position and how you can support command. Feel free to copy and provide portions of this guidebook, especially parts of Chapter II *Orientation to the School Liaison Officer Position*, such as *Vision, Mission and Goals, Overview of School Liaison Officer Responsibilities*, and *Why the School Liaison Officer is Important to Command*.
- Command's views on the scope of your responsibility and priorities.



- Method and frequency of contact preferred by command (i.e., does he/she envision meeting monthly or as needed, formal briefings or casual discussions, etc.).
- Willingness to reassess your job after some period of time and provide feedback.

Selecting and Setting Up the Work Space

Location, location, location! If you have any choice in the matter, select a location as close to Army Community Service (ACS) or Soldier Center as possible. Being co-located with the Soldier Center increases your visibility among newcomers to the installation.

Because you will occasionally work directly with families and may address potentially sensitive issues, a private location is highly desirable. If you cannot find private work space, identify other nearby space that you can use as necessary (such as a conference room).

As for furniture, you will need a desk, file cabinet for storing resource files, and guest chairs. You will also need a variety of equipment including a computer, printer, answering machine, pager, cellular phone, and copier. Because you need to be optimally accessible to all of your customers, it is important that you have voice mail, e-mail, and fax capability. Thus, you will need to arrange for telephone lines and Internet access.

Gathering Information about Military Children and Local Schools

Determine the size and characteristics of the military families and children you serve. You may find that your predecessor has this information in the School Liaison Officer files. If you do not have this information, consult the installation's personnel support division or assignment office to gather information regarding:

- Number and ages of the school-age children assigned to the installation
- Number of school-age children living on post and off post
- Number of school-age military children attending each local school
- Number of school-age children enrolled in EFMP
- Anticipated number of incoming and outgoing children during next rotation cycle.



It is also important to have basic information about the schools military children attend. Thus, obtain the following information from the school system:

- Number of schools in each district
- Percent of military children in each local school's student population
- Costs to educate each child for each district
- Amount of Impact Aid each school district receives
- Number of units and schools participating in Partnerships in Education.

Reviewing School Liaison Officer Files

You may find that your predecessor maintained logs on issues he/she addressed with families and schools as well as resource files containing directories and contact information for various individuals and agencies. Review and become familiar with these logs and files to help get up to speed on what you can expect and to identify the network that has already been established.

Learning Key School Policies and Terminology

Obtain copies of pertinent military and school policy documents and gain a basic familiarity with their contents. Ensure you have the most recent versions of these documents. A list of key documents is provided in Chapter V. Copies of select documents are provided in Volume 2 of this guidebook.

Read school newsletters, newspapers, and Web sites to become familiar with the issues and in particular the lingo used by school systems. People will find you more credible and will be more receptive to you if you can "speak their language."

Learning Basic Military Organization/Customs/Terminology

If you come to the job without prior exposure to the military, it is imperative that you quickly become acquainted with the basics. An ideal way to get oriented is to take Level I Army Family Team Building (AFTB) classes. This is free instruction aimed at family members but typically open to all. AFTB will provide you with the fundamentals, beyond terminology, that will enhance your ability to work with and for the military community. Your supervisor or Army Community Service can tell you how to get in touch with AFTB. Also review key military documents cited in Chapter V, *Contacts and Resources*.



Learning about Local School-Related Issues

Depending on your location and job prior to becoming the installation's School Liaison Officer, it is not always easy to "get up to speed." Actively seek out information about local school issues. Begin by reading the local newspaper carefully. Take the opportunity when you are introduced to people who might have knowledge of issues, such as parents of school-age children and installation family support agencies, to ask them to talk with you, whether on the spot or at a later date. People will appreciate your interest, and you will be the wiser for it. Also, watch for opportunities to attend public forums such as town hall meetings and PTA/PTO meetings. News about districts and schools is also available in district and school newsletters, local cable TV channel, and district and individual school Web sites.

Visiting and Touring Schools

Demonstrate your interest in forging relationships with the schools by meeting the school principals early in your tenure as the School Liaison Officer. While touring the schools, take advantage of opportunities to introduce yourself to teachers. Having business cards or brochures with you while you are touring the schools and meeting people there enhances your credibility and gives you a jump start on marketing. For further information about marketing and ways to build a network in both the school and military communities, see the section on *Strategies for Success* in Chapter III.

Finding a Mentor and Peer Support

Remember that many School Liaison Officers around the globe face the same challenges you do. Find the School Liaison Officers whose challenges are most similar to your own and build a network with them. If you are a new School Liaison Officer, and if travel funds are available, find an experienced School Liaison Officer whom you can visit, shadow, and basically "apprentice with" for a few days. If you don't know how to identify some School Liaison Officers in circumstances similar to your own, call headquarters.

V. CONTACTS AND RESOURCES



As a School Liaison Officer you will be coordinating and working with numerous other individuals to address school issues and to garner the support needed. For this reason, it is important to have and maintain a network in the military and school communities. (For information on how to network and work with these communities, see Chapter III on *Roles and Responsibilities*.) This chapter identifies who you should know and where to get directories that provide the names and telephone numbers you need. There are also key documents and information that are important for School Liaison Officers to have. A list of these documents and where to obtain them is provided in this chapter. Additionally, Web sites that can serve as useful resources are identified.

Key Contacts

There are individuals in the installation and school communities that you will either be working with directly or from whom you are seeking assistance. Get to know the individuals and agencies listed to establish your network.

Installation Contacts

Your installation network consists of command, family support agencies, installation operations and support agencies, and other key individuals and groups associated with the installation. Information on how to contact these individuals can be found in an installation directory (see next section on *Key Resources*).

Command

- Garrison commander
- Deputy garrison commander
- Garrison's Command Sergeant Major

Family support agencies

- Army Community Service (ACS)
- ACS Family Advocacy Program (FAP)
- ACS Relocation Program (RAP)
- Army Family Action Plan (AFAP)
- Child Development Services (CDS)
- Child and Youth Services (CYS)



- Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP within both ACS and medical departments)
- Family Life Program/Chaplain
- Installation Volunteer Coordinator (IVC)
- Mental Health Services
- Social Work Services
- Substance Abuse Services

Installation operations and support agencies

- Civilian Misconduct Authority [overseas only]—disciplinary actions
- Community Club—banquet facility rental
- Directorate of Information Management (DOIM)—availability of computer hardware
- Directorate of of Public Works (DPW)—construction
- Judge Advocate General (JAG)—legal advice
- Library
- Military Police (MP) and Provost Marshall Office (PMO)—security and prevention education programs
- Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR)—recreational facility rental (may need to contact each facility directly when arranging rental of a specific facility)
- Motor Pool—transportation
- Personnel Support Division (PSD)—information on relocating personnel
- Public Affairs Office (PAO)—installation newspaper and communications

Key individuals and groups

- Command spouses
- Family Support Group (FSG)—units may have one or more FSGs



School Contacts

Get to know various school personnel at the state, district, and school levels. Specific titles and responsibilities will vary from state to state and district to district, but the personnel titles listed below are typical. Information on how to contact these individuals can be found in a school directory (see *Key Resources*), obtained from the superintendent's office or a state's education agency Web page.

State level personnel

- Superintendent of schools
- State Department of Education
- State Board of Education
- Commissioner, Office of the Governor

District level personnel (Regional in DoDDS)

- Superintendent and assistant superintendent
- Director of Curricula (elementary and secondary education)
- Director of Transportation
- Director of Gifted and Talented Education
- Director of Special Education
- Director of Testing and Evaluation
- Director of Health Services (immunization and medical records)
- Director of Social Services (includes school lunch program coordinators)
- Public Information Officer
- School-home partnership (DoDDS only)
- School board members
- President of the districtwide Parent-Teacher Association
- Volunteer programs
- Business Partnerships
- Community Outreach



Private, public and defense school level personnel

- School advisory committee members (when committee is established)
- Principals and assistant principals
- School secretaries (registration, attendance, student records)
- Guidance counselors and school psychologists
- Points of contact for PIE (once PIE is established)
- Social worker
- Parent liaison (public school assistance and outreach to families)
- School nurse or health aide
- Teachers
- Special education teachers
- Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC)

Key Resources

To address many school issues, you will need to know about key policies and legislation. In addition, there are other materials and information useful to have to work in the military and school communities effectively. This section identifies the following resource information for School Liaison Officers :

- Resource directories
- Legislation, regulations, and policy documents
- Other resource materials
- Web sites.

Resource Directories

There are many directories available that will provide you with the names and telephone numbers for individuals and agencies you want to contact. A list of key directories follows.

Installation directories. An installation book containing general information about the installation and units, contacts, and other information can be obtained from Army Community Service (ACS) or Welcome Center. For further assistance in locating installation individuals and agencies, contact Army Community Service (ACS) or call the installation locator.



School directories. Contact the superintendent's office (specifically the superintendent's administrative assistant) to obtain a directory of school district personnel. You will need to contact each district to obtain a directory for the district. Similarly, each school probably will have its own directory. A directory for the Department of Defense schools can be found on the Department of Defense Education Activity Web site (see the section on Web sites).

Community service agency directories. Information on community service agencies can be obtained from Army Community Service and county government offices. These agencies are also listed in the telephone book.

Legislation, Regulations, and Policy Documents

The following is a list of key legislation, regulations, and policy documents that School Liaison Officers should have. Those documents marked with an asterisk can be found in Volume 2 of this guidebook.

Federal government

- Department of Education regulations and educational goals (see Department of Education Web site)
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (see Department of Education Web site)
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Computers*
- Impact Aid*
- School Lunch Program*
- Defense Dependents' Education*

Department of Defense

- Use of DoD facilities*
- Student meals*
- Department of Defense Schools*
- Special Education*
- Assistance to local education agencies*
- Community relations*
- Reporting incidents of child abuse and neglect*



U.S. Army

- AR 360-61 (Army Community Relations)*
- AR 600-20 (Army Command Policy)*
- AR 608-1 (Army Community Service Program)*
- AR 608-18 (Army Family Advocacy Program)*
- AR 608-75 (Exceptional Family Member Program)*
- HQDA Message (Policy for Personnel In- and Out-Processing)*
- Memorandum (volunteering in schools)*
- Memorandum (parent-teacher conferences)*

State government

- State education regulations and policies
- State curricula requirements
- State education standards
- Policy on child abuse and neglect
- Home schooling guidelines
- School of choice policy

Local school districts and schools

- Policy and procedures on school violence, discipline, disruptive behavior, etc.*
- Enrollment and registration requirements
- Redistricting guidelines
- Parent-Teacher conference policy
- District home schooling guidelines*
- School of choice policy

Installation

- Discipline policies and procedures
- Security policies
- Policy and procedures on use of installation facilities



Other Resource Materials

The following is a list of reference and resource materials that School Liaison Officers will find useful.

Department of Education

- Minicatalog of free publications
- Satellite Town Meetings (English and Spanish)
- Videotapes of Satellite Town Meetings
- 1-800-USA-LEARN
- National Library of Education
- Community Update Newsletter
- EDInfo Electronic Newsletter

U.S. Army

- Directory of phone numbers and e-mail addresses of Army School Liaison Officers
- School Liaison Officer position description
- Military rank and structure

Local school districts and schools

- School calendars
- Student/Faculty handbooks
- School results on standardized test scores

Community

- List of child care options
- List of community recreation programs
- List of summer programs
- Job hot line for youth



Installation

- Military calendars
- Demographics
- Welcome packet
- Installation Fact Sheet

Materials developed by or for School Liaison Officers

- PIE/Adopt-A-School Handbook
- Adopt-A-School Assessment
- Template of authorization request for unit to partner with school; Memorandum of Understanding
- Sample Steering Committee Meeting Packet

Web Sites

Below is a list of Web sites that can provide useful information in addressing issues in your community. This list does not constitute endorsement by the Department of Army. This list contains Web sites of interest to School Liaison Officers and military families. You may want to publicize select Web sites along with your installation's Web site to military families. For more information and the latest updates, check the Family Member Education Web site designed for School Liaison Officers at: http://trol.redstone.army.mil/mwr/family_member.

Web sites for School Liaison Officers

- American Association of School Administrators: www.aasa.org
- American School Counselor Associations: <http://www.schoolcounselor.org>
- American School Directory: www.asd.com
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development: www.ascd.org
- Council of Chief State School Officers: www.ccsso.org
- Department of Defense Education Activity: www.odedodea.edu
- Department of Education: www.ed.gov
- Educational Standards Internet Site: www.putwest.boces.org
- Education Commission of the States: www.ecs.org/ecs/ecsweb.nsf



- Fort Meade School Liaison Office: www.recgov/ftmeade/schools
- K-12 Schools/Districts on the Web: www.tenet.edu/education/main.html
- Learning First Alliance: www.learningfirst.org
- Military Child Education Coalition: www.militarychild.org
- Military Family Resource Center: <http://mfrc.calib.com>
- Military Impacted Schools Association: www.esu3.org/districts/bellevue/misa/organiz.html
- Military Relocation Information Network: www.mrin.com
- National Association for College Admission Counseling: www.nacac.com/index.html
- National Association for the Education of Young Children: www.naeyc.org
- National Association of Elementary School Principals: www.naesp.org
- National Association of Federally Impacted Schools: www.sso.org/nafis/
- National Association of Secondary School Principals: www.nasaap.org
- National Association of School Administrators: www.aasa.org
- National Association of School Librarians: www.aasl.org
- National Association of School Psychologists: www.naspweb.org
- National Association of State Boards of Education: www.nasbe.org
- National Association of Partners in Education: www.napehq.org
- National Center for Education Statistics: <http://nces.ed.gov>
- National Foundation for the Improvement of Education: www.nfie.org
- National Military Family Association: www.nmfa.org
- National Middle School Association: www.nmsa.org
- National School Boards Association: www.nsba.org
- National PTA: www.pta.org
- Partnership for Family Involvement in Education: <http://pfie.ed.gov>
- The School Report: www.nsr.com

Keep in mind that many associations and organizations have state-level offices that you may find more useful to you in addressing issues in your community.



Web sites for military families

- **Army Family Liaison:** www.hqda.army.mil/acsim/family/family.htm
Serves all soldiers, civilians and families of active Army, the Guard, Reserves and Retirees. This site provides a resource library and publications online.
- **Dads At A Distance:** www.daads.com
Designed to help fathers who have to be away from their children. Features ways dads can maintain and strengthen the relationships they have with their children while they are away.
- **Famnet Crossroads:** www.famnet.com
Provides an easy one-stop process for locating a particular military installation within a state or overseas country where additional links can direct you to specific agencies within the organization. Listings are updated daily.
- **Military Brats Online:** www.lynxu.com/brats
Created to connect U.S. military brats with people and places that have shaped their lives. Includes links to alumni organizations and searchable databases to locate lost friends.
- **Military City:** www.militarycity.com
Owned and operated by the Army Times Publishing Company, with links to military newspapers online. Most of the site is free, but a special section featuring searchable databases, archives, and other high-value information is available for a modest fee.
- **Military Teens on the Move:** <http://dticaw.dtic.mil/mtom>
Provides information on a variety of topics of interest to military teens and has several components to assist teens with moving.
- **Overseas Brats:** www.overseasbrats.com
Information on overseas schools and upcoming regional get-togethers. This site also provides a number of overseas alumni group web links.
- **Standard Installation Topic Exchange Service:** www.dmdc.osd.mil/sites
Designed for military families undergoing a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) move. This Web site provides information on military installations worldwide and addresses a variety of family concerns including housing, schools, and childcare.



Web sites related to special needs

- **Council for Exceptional Children: www.cec.sped.org**
Dedicated to improving educational outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities, students with disabilities, and/or the gifted. Includes information on appropriate governmental policies, professional standards, and national programs.
- **LD Online: www.ldonline.org**
Provides an interactive guide to learning disabilities for parents, teachers, and children. Click on Where to Find Help for a comprehensive listing of resources on learning disabilities, national and state organizations and agencies, online resources, and much more.
- **National Association of Private Schools for Exceptional Children: www.napsec.com**
Offers a free referral service to parents and professionals who are looking for an appropriate placement for their child, or client.
- **National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities: www.nichcy.org**
Provides information on specific disabilities and disability-related issues for families, educators and other professionals. In addition, maintains a list of contacts on organizations and resources at the national and state levels.

VI . Self-Assessment



This chapter describes a process and provides tools for School Liaison Officers to assess and reflect on their performance. The chapter comprises two sections:

- How am I doing?
- What do I do next?

The first section focuses on the key questions that will help School Liaison Officers examine what activities they performed and how well. The second section identifies potential steps for addressing performance issues. It is recommended that School Liaisons Officers conduct this informal self-assessment each year.

How Am I Doing?

The checklist appearing in Part A is designed to be a quick tool to assess whether you are carrying out critical activities in the four areas of responsibility for School Liaison Officers. The activities listed are both important tasks and effective strategies identified by School Liaison Officers. The checklist is for your use only. Review the checklist to see how many activities you performed in the past year.

It is important to think not only about what you have done, but also about how well you have done it. The questions in Part B are designed to help you assess your effectiveness.



Self-Assessment for School Liaison Officers

Part A: Identifying Activities Performed

Within the past year, have I done the following?

Representing, informing, and assisting command

- ☐ Educated command on School Liaison Officer role (may only be necessary during the first year of garrison commander's tour at the installation).
- ☐ Kept command informed on key parent and community concerns.
- ☐ Provided current and comprehensive information needed by command.
- ☐ Regularly attended school board or committee meetings.
- ☐ Kept command informed of my efforts.

Assisting military families with school issues

- ☐ Made written material about the School Liaison Officer role along with contact information available to military families using a variety of methods (including Web site, newspaper, and Welcome packet) and the assistance of others (such as units and agencies such as Army Community Service).
- ☐ Developed and disseminated information on topics of concern to military families, especially relocating families with school-age children.
- ☐ Conducted a needs assessment or focus groups or participated in forums in which military families can identify their issues of concern.
- ☐ Provided appropriate information and referral(s) to parents requesting assistance with unique issues/problems.
- ☐ Educated families and/or served as mediator with school staff to aid individual families in resolving problems/conflicts with a school.
- ☐ Informed command and school representatives about parent concerns.

Interfacing, educating, and coordinating with local school systems

- ☐ Educated school personnel on military lifestyle and educational issues of concern to military families with children.
- ☐ Maintained communication with school representatives.
- ☐ Identified and obtained from schools information to be disseminated to military families.
- ☐ Arranged access to installation facilities and coordinated assistance from installation operations agencies, as needed.
- ☐ Worked with command, parents, and installation agencies to address school issues.

Forging partnerships between the military and schools

- ☐ Provided oversight of the Partnerships in Education (PIE). Identified and coordinated military units to provide support to local schools.
- ☐ Worked with other installation agencies to coordinate efforts to assist military families.
- ☐ Established community and state relationships to obtain support and assistance for local schools.



Self-Assessment for School Liaison Officers

Part B: Examining How Well Activities Are Performed

- Does command clearly understand your role?
- Do you clearly understand what issues you are expected to handle?
- How well informed is command about parent and community issues?
- How well are you able to provide accurate and up-to-date information to command, parents and schools?
- How easy or difficult is it for you to obtain information that you need?
- How much interaction does command have with the school system? Is the nature of this interaction helping to communicate the military community's concerns to the school system?
- Are you satisfied with the working relationship you have with command and schools?
- How often do you communicate with command and school representatives? How often do you meet with school representatives?
- How well informed are you about parents' and schools' concerns?
- How many parents and schools know who you are?
- How many incoming and outgoing military families received information on school issues?
- How well are you able to respond to parent inquiries?
- To what extent do command, parents, and schools call upon you for assistance?
- How many and what type of problems do command, schools, and parents report to you? How many complaints does the garrison commander receive?
- How confident are you in dealing with the issues you face?
- How much confidence do individuals have in your ability to resolve problems? How often do individuals "bypass" you to seek help from a higher authority?
- What feedback, if any, have you received? What feedback has command received about you?



Asking yourself these questions will provide clues about what is working and not working. The next section talks about what you can do if things are not working.

What Do I Do Next?

Each year, it is important to conduct a self-assessment. Based on your assessment of how well you are doing, you will need to consider what changes, if any, you need to make. To increase your effectiveness, you may need to take one or more of the following steps:

- Obtain and review key document(s), especially policies, legislation, program directories. (See Chapter V for a list of key documents.)
- Update the information you have.
- Identify and contact individuals to expand your network. (See Chapter V for a list of individuals you should know.)
- Modify the frequency and/or methods of how you communicate with command, parents, and schools.
- Find different ways to learn about and monitor parent and community issues.
- Alter the type of information you provide to command, schools, and parents as well as how and when you provide this information.
- Shift the amount of time you spend on certain activities.
- Get training in a skill area.

For ideas on how to do these things, consult Chapters III, IV and V of this guidebook. In addition, contact other School Liaison Officers directly through the Headquarters Web site, e-mail, or visits to other installations.